

Wednesday, March 1, 2023
Education Committee - Public Hearing
Testimony of Daniel Pearson, Executive Director of Educators for Excellence
H.B. No. 6757 AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS.

Chairs McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Daniel Pearson and I am the Executive Director for Educators for Excellence, a teacher-led nonprofit with nearly 1,000 members statewide that seeks to promote student equity and elevate teachers' voices in policy decisions. Today I submit testimony on behalf of our members who are current classroom teachers and educators who are dedicated to their students and profession.

The current Connecticut Teacher Evaluation System provides essential information about the performance and the impact of our teachers. The changes proposed in Bill No. 6757 threaten to decrease access to that information, and ultimately decrease the positive outcomes of the teacher evaluation process. Our analysis on this bill was completed with the help of NCTQ and other Connecticut organizations to ensure we are keeping a holistic view in mind when making recommendations. Our recommendations and analyses are data-based not only from Connecticut, but from data across the country.

Connecticut students deserve high quality education, and that means filling our schools with high quality teachers. Additionally, Connecticut public school teachers need support and guidance on their classroom performance to ensure they are performing to the best of their abilities. As one of only 22 states that requires annual evaluations, Connecticut is a leader in this space. Rather than taking away aspects of the evaluation process, we should be honing in on those that make the process successful, and adding aspects that will be helpful to schools and students.

We need to ensure that through any changes to the teacher evaluation process, academics remain at the forefront of our goals. The proposed bill removes this indicator in its language regarding indicators of student growth. Without this specification, evaluations become too vague and our students will suffer, as teachers lose guidance from the state on what each should be focusing on in their classrooms.

The proposed bill also eliminates the requirement that districts use four performance evaluation designators—exemplary, proficient, developing, and below standard—in their evaluation of teachers. Removing these categories and the requirement that superintendents report aggregate evaluation ratings to the board of education limits transparency and accountability,

eliminates the ability to compare teacher performance across districts, and makes it more difficult to identify teachers who need support.

Connecticut should be looking for ways to improve the evaluation system, not weaken it. For example, if we increase the number of formal evaluations completed in a year for new teachers, we can provide the guidance that these teachers need to improve their skills, and to remain in the classroom. If we invest in our current teachers, rather than eliminate some of their already limited resources, and if we give them instruction on the skills they need to further improve their classrooms, they will feel more confident in the classroom, and will be more likely to stay a Connecticut teacher and solve the staffing shortages plaguing our schools.

The input of both our students and educators are also vital to the success of Connecticut classrooms. Connecticut needs to incorporate student survey data in teacher evaluations in order to identify the needs of different schools and student groups, as well as to see the impact educators are having on real students. Also, keeping in mind educators' feelings on the evaluation process, and taking into account their own input will help maintain positive relationships and yield positive results.

It is also important that no changes be made to this process without keeping in mind the role that racial, ethnic, and geographical disparities may play in our schools and in our educators' approaches to teaching. Connecticut must ensure that the evaluation process is equitable across districts—and clear in language and direction—to ensure that students, no matter their zip code, location, or race, are receiving the instruction that they best connect with and that they need to succeed.

There are many ways in which we can increase school equity and learning for both teachers and students throughout Connecticut. It is high time that we improve the teacher evaluation process and add to it, rather than taking away from it and making it more ambiguous. While Connecticut currently has a very progressive and effective teaching evaluation process, the changes proposed in Bill No. 6757, will diminish the quality of our evaluations and negatively affect the broader goal of equitable education for all students in Connecticut.

I urge you to take this into consideration and vote no on 6757.

Thank you for your time,

Daniel Pearson
Executive Director
Educators For Excellence - Connecticut (E4E-CT)

About E4E

Founded by public school teachers, Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of more than 33,000 educators nationwide, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify

issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

For more information, please visit e4e.org.